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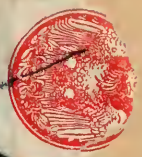

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The National Warning:

A

SERMON,

PREACHED ON THE SABBATH AFTER THE DEATH OF

GENERAL WM. H. HARRISON,

LATE

PRESIDENT

OF THE

UNITED STATES.

By ICHABOD S. SPENCER,
Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, in Brooklyn.

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SERMON.

PSALM CXLVI. 3—5.

Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.

WHAT words could be more appropriate to this day and place, or more appropriate to the sensibilities of sadness, which fill your hearts? The President of the United States is no more! A nation is clothed in mourning! Death, for the first time, has invaded the highest seat of office, in the government of our nation, clothed the Presidential chair in sackcloth, and involved a nation in mourning. Your hearts feel it; they *all* feel it. Such an event is a national calamity; and our respect for human nature would be diminished, if we did not behold the solemnity and the sympathy of affliction rising above all other passions, and burying, on a day like this, all the animosity and rancor of political strifes. It *is* so. We are not here as politicians, or as partizans. We are here, as *men*;—as *Americans*, who love our country and its constitution;—as *mortals*, warned by the death of a fellow mortal;—as *Christians*, to recognize, in our sadness, the hand of Almighty God, and to have our sad and solemn sensibilities join their voice, to that of his word,

Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth; he returneth to the earth. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help; whose hope is in the Lord his God.

Neither the offices of this day, nor of this occasion, belong so much to politics and to eloquence, as they belong to grief and to religion. Under the hand of God, an event has occurred, which deeply affects our country. It is *such* an event, of such a nature, as, in his Holy Word, he has often called us to notice. We could not be good Christians, or good Americans, if we should allow ourselves to be wholly unaffected by it; and we should fall beneath the duty we owe ourselves, as citizens of the state and as mortal men, if we did not pause to enquire with deep sensibility and profound submission, what lessons the God of nations designs to teach us.

The occasion is too sad for eulogy. It is a nation's calamity, and a nation's mourning. We are to regard, not so much the man, as the President; rather the station he filled and the mighty interests connected with his filling it well, than his character, as a statesman or a citizen. Eulogy might find materials for her pencil, for aught we know, in the chequered and eventful story of his life; in the integrity which marked his official conduct; and in the modesty of his private living; and in the philanthropy which every where characterized his intercourse with men. But with these, we have little to do. It is enough for us, that he was recently placed at the head of this great nation,

and that now, so soon and so suddenly, he is placed in his grave! The occasion is too solemn, the day, the place too sacred, our hearts too sad, for the least recurrence to party sentiments. It becomes us rather to enquire, how religion—how God, its Author, would have us affected, in regard to national government and this calamity. Nor do we need any thing more. However firm his opponents may have been in their opposition to his official elevation, death has disarmed opposition; and now, the occasion speaks to us ALL, as men, as Americans, as mortals, and flings away into the distance every vestige of political rancor; while it teaches us from the mute tongue of death, such lessons as no other tongue can utter!

We will not stop to prove to you, from the Word of God, the propriety and duty of noticing such an event, on a day, and in a place like this. Not a party, but a nation mourns. It is a national shock, and warning. And a single moment's recollection will call to your mind, how often in his Word, our Maker calls on us to notice his dealings with nations, and those who rule over them. Our religion, while it lays its foundation deep, in the sanctified sensibilities and heavenly hopes of a regenerated spirit, fails not to instruct us in our duties of citizenship, and to warn us against too much reliance upon any mere human instrumentalities, for any of our hoped-for felicities.

A moment's thought too, will be enough to convince you, how precious are the interests which stand connected with a national event like this.

Amid all our pursuits, we need some foundation for our reliances. Fluctuation and uncertainty are very unhappy for us. Instability and change in the counsels of a nation affect all its interests; and are as unfavorable to mental culture, to good morals, to good neighborhood, and to religion, as they are to our mere worldly interests. Oh! how often, have the excitements of political affairs,—the disappointments which grow out of a nation's altered policy,—the agitations of public life, and especially the absorbing interests and sensibilities waked into exercise through a whole nation, when the trumpet-summons of war calls her strong men to the *high places of the field*;—how lamentably often, have such things called off the minds of a people, from their personal attention to *salvation*, and spread a demoralizing influence over the whole face of society! Religion has mourned,—the church has languished,—her sabbaths have been dishonored,—her sermons and her sacred communions have lost their influence, by reason of that national action, which spreads its effects through the whole framework of society! Our religion is wise, when it calls us to *pray for kings, and all that are in authority*; and when it calls us to notice an event, like the death of the President; and seeing the hand of God in it, calls us, as men, as Christians, as Americans, to aim at improving a calamity, which has clothed us in sackcloth!

But we feel a delicacy and find a difficulty in attempting to discharge, with fidelity, the duties plainly incumbent upon the ministry of God on such

an occasion. We have a two-fold trial, sad and perplexing on each of its parts.—On the one hand, the division of men into two great political parties, at a time, and in circumstances, when such momentous interests are supposed to be at stake, constitutes a matter of difficulty to us. At such a time, a faithful minister of God is not likely to be rightly understood. He is extremely liable to be misapprehended. Each of the opposing bodies would arrogate to itself all the services and all the sentiments of every man around them. Each would enforce into its service, even the ministry, whose sole work should be, to teach men the truth of God, and lead them in paths of righteousness to heaven. In the utterance of these truths, it not only sometimes, but very commonly happens, that their reproofs will fall, now on one side, and then on another. That line of right and wrong—that immutable and holy line of distinction, drawn by the hand of God, on which the eye of the minister should steadily rest, as he attempts the duties of his office, is not the line of an earthly partizanship, or earthly preferences. As he walks upon it, he will sometimes be obliged to cross the path of one, and sometimes the path of the other, of the conflicting parties. Every such step is likely to be deemed an error, and an injury, by those whose minds are made up, and whose feelings are enlisted, on those mere earthly considerations, which it becomes the functions of the minister of God, to fling into the back-ground of his contemplations;—while he sees constantly before him, that living line of *distinction between right and wrong*, which reaches on, over

death, and lies out, on the endless fields of eternity before him. If a minister of God would do his duty, he must be absolutely independent of both sides; and ready to censure and commend, on the principles of that distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness, laid down in the Word of God, and with absolute indifference to all other distinctions. Such, we have been, such we ever will be, while standing here. Our objects are not mere earthly objects. Our business rises beyond all that is merely national; and takes its bearings and directions, from that eternal line, which shall lie for ever between the different parties, who will be congregated in very different places in eternity. The difficulty is, our hearers are not apt enough to think so, and therefore liable to misapprehend. It distresses us, but we cannot help it.

On the other hand the influences of a long-continued excitement are not readily dismissed, even when men are *disposed* to be free from them. Though an occasion of such solemnity as this, is too sad for the indulgence of political preferences, (and we are assured, that not a man here would willingly lend his heart to them, to-day;) still, it is difficult to speak of this event, without exciting thoughts, which ought not to desecrate our sadness, without waking emotions, which ought now to be hushed, under this pall of death, which Almighty God has hung over our nation! Nor is it easy for men whose hearts have been so much, and so recently excited, at once to dismiss the influence of aroused sensibilities, and forbid improper feelings to be mixed up, with the matter of deep and affecting tenderness before us.

But let us try. We speak not, we mourn not as partizans. We have a higher office at the entrance gate of eternity, the Chief Magistrate of the nation has vanished out of our sight! Not a man of us, will refuse, to day, to think and feel as an American ;—and heaven grant, that not a man of us may refuse to think and feel, as a mortal, as a dependant and dying sinner ought!

The text admonishes us against trust in man,—in *princes*. It calls us to put our trust in God. The mention of official dignity in the text leaves little room to doubt, that its intention was to caution us, against an undue reliance upon *princes*, or official men, in reference to those very objects, for which they hold their office. They are only instruments; frail instruments at least: *Their breath goeth forth; they return to the earth.* Our hope should be *in the God of Jacob*, first and supremely.

The event which has hung this pulpit in mourning, seems to us, to contain a very special enforcement of the text. Notice some particulars.

1. This is a calamity entirely new and unexpected. God has come before us in a new form of action. He has commissioned his servant, death, to invade a spot where he had never trodden before. Among our multitude of national mercies, it seems to me that we ought not to forget, that He who holds all lives in his hand, has never smitten the head of our nation before. We have never been flung into uncertainty, never had our expectations blasted, never had our fears gathering round the vacated seat of our highest magistrate, till now. For fifty-two years death was commanded to respect that chair. One

after another of its occupants was permitted to retire from it; and some of them, after filling up the remainder of their days in the studies and stillness of retirement, died, as most men would probably wish to die, in the bosom of their families, and soothed by those tender and familiar sympathies, which do most, of all *earthly* things, to rob death of his dreadfulness, and make us die in peace. The respect and affections of a grateful people followed their retiring magistrates to the walks of private life; and when, from time to time, their decease was announced, a nation put on the emblems of an unaffected sorrow. To qualify, or mar the purity of that grief *then*, there was little danger of the risings of partisan opinion. Those, whose death woke grief into exercise, died as private men. Then, there was little to hold back the hearts of the people, from bowing, in supreme and uninterrupted homage, before the God of all; and aiming, without temptation, to improve personally the event. Now it is different. The Lord God has begun to deal with us in a new way. We have little anticipated it. Our past history had not compelled us to do so. And there is reason to fear, that our anxieties in the Presidential canvass, and our *trust* in the individual chosen, were not sufficiently qualified by the sentiment which lies on the face of our text. Oh! if we had duly remembered God, if we had been properly impressed with a sense of the uncertainty of life; how much *less trust* would our hearts have reposed on the illustrious man, and how much *more trust* should we have been led to repose on God. Alas! how prone we are to trust in men, without remem-

bering their frailty! how apt to trust in man, when we ought to trust in God! We forget what man is,—*his breath goeth forth, he returneth to the earth.*

The Christian not only, but every sober student of the Bible, must have remarked how the Lord God changes the forms of his dispensations, when his dispensations have been disregarded, and a people have not acknowledged his hand. Stroke follows stroke! New forms of trial come! Blows fall heavier, if blows are disregarded! The holy God, has often made famine follow in the track of war, and then sent pestilence on its dreadful march, along the very line already strowed with the bones of the slain and the starved! One hope perishes after another! *He gave their increase unto the caterpillar,—* * * he gave up their flocks to hot thunderbolts, * * * he gave their life over to the pestilence. That which the palmer-worm hath left, hath the locust eaten; and that, which the locust hath left, hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left, hath the cater-pillar eaten. Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children and their children another generation.*—God is unwilling to punish. He usually warns before he strikes. He seldom opens all the stores of his judgments at once.

Now, it is not for us to affirm, that the Lord God sends this event as a judgment. We do not positively know that. But I am unwilling to believe, that there is a man among us, who does not think so. And certainly, when such a *new* occurrence as this, takes place, an occurrence, which is beyond question, a calamity;—when heaven deals with us,

as it never has dealt before; it becomes us with devout homage and submission to enquire, whether our calamity is not intended, as a national judgment. It is a shock to the nation. It is a shock in a new way. It seems to come upon the heels of calamities that preceded it. We have had wars. In unnatural contest, the arm of our father-land was lifted against us, and we whetted the steel to shed the blood of our kindred. The exasperated Indians have butchered our citizens, and our vengeance has compelled them to the death-cry, in the depths of their own forests and fastnesses! We have had commotions of violence among ourselves; and disregard of the majesty of the Laws has compelled us to see, that such a spirit of violence must be checked, or we could not be secure in property, in liberty or life. Fires have done their work of destruction in our cities;—from wrecked or burning vessels, our friends have sunk with hopeless wailings in the deep waters;—and distress has followed distress, in the trade and business of almost the whole nation. No matter what hath done these things. *The Lord reigneth.* The Lord hath done them. Would to God, we could make men believe this,—see it,—be affected by it! Men are only his instruments! Fires, storms are his! Wars are his judgments! If we honored *Him* and recognized *Him* as we ought, oh! how often should we cease from our abusive contentions with one another, and pour our petitions into the ears of our Heavenly Father.—These things have come from God. And now, when a new calamity hath fallen upon us, if we ought not to regard it as a judgment, we certainly ought to

see in it, a new act of Divine Providence, which tells us, what the text tells!—The merchant can see, that the cherished hopes of his anxiety hang on a brittle thread; when they go no farther, than to the national regulations of trade. All his expected good may be dashed in a single hour! The mechanic can see,—the statesman,—the laborer in every department; how easy it is for God, to turn their light into darkness! We can all see, that God hath met us in a new form of action; and in such a form, as ought to engrave the sentiments of this text deep on every heart; *Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man in whom there is no help; his breath goeth forth; he returneth to his earth!* If the hand of God hath not unstopped another vial and poured it out upon us; certainly, his hand hath written this warning in a new spot; and its letters of blackness meet every eye, that is turned towards the Presidential chair! That seat is hung with black! He who sat in it slumbers with the dead! Our anticipations are rebuked. We cannot contemplate him filling up the days of his office, and retiring to die in the bosom of his family! Another place has witnessed his exit;—other friends have gathered round his death-bed! And while a nation mingles its tears with those of his distressed family, let a nation remember the God of heaven *means something*, by this new form of his warning.

2. This calamity has fallen upon us in a critical season. In other and older nations the succession of power has often been the signal for rivalry and rebellion. *We* are passing the ordeal calmly. But

each transition of power, from the hands of one man to those of another, constitutes a period of delicacy in our nation. But now, it is more than usually so. No matter whether the people think justly or not; a vast portion of them *do* think, that their great interests are mainly affected by the action of the government. No matter whether there is just occasion for it, or not; there has been a very unusual amount of excitement in political things. No matter whether we had really any thing to fear; it is a fact, that questions, great questions of statesmanship, and national policy, and interpretation of the constitution,—matters which lie down deep in the foundations of our security,—such questions have been exciting the mind of the nation. At just this point of time,—at this crisis,—at this critical period,—the arm of God is seen! There have been few periods, when the death of our Chief Magistrate would have been an event so full of warning! We do not, indeed, anticipate from it, any great and signal disaster to the councils of our nation. Probably, the course of things may go on, very much as if the event had not occurred. But we know not. And, at any rate, the Lord has sent this providence, at a period, when it seems to have a burden of significance. The nation is filled with complaints. Its interests are suffering. Matters of deep moment are pending. In ordinary times, such an event would not have been as fearful. We can bear some shocks, but the united force of them may shake us down! Deep bedded on rock, as may be the pillars of our constitution, and firmly as they may withstand the pressure of one thing after another; we are to

remember, that when the force of accumulated pressures crowds against them at once, they may be torn up from their firm foundations, and cease to overshadow and protect our dearest earthly interests! Amid our common and extensive derangements and distresses, we have, as a people, as a troubled nation, been very much disposed to attribute our troubles to human agency; and if they really sprang from that source, religion would not blame us for censuring their authors. But we have too much overlooked the fact of a divine rule. And now, *God* has himself given us a shock; and religion *will* blame us, if we do not devoutly recognize his hand, and devoutly acknowledge that we need his protection, in this crisis of our affairs!—And this warning comes, precisely according to his own majesty and our exigencies. He warns us by death. We need warning so. We are in danger of overvaluing the world, and the governments we live under. We shall not ourselves be fitted for the extraordinary duties of our troubled circumstances, if we forget our mortality. This idea is scriptural. When the Lord commanded Isaiah to make a proclamation in the ears of the nation about its destinies; he was not ordered to reveal some deep secret of government, which study could not reach; or announce merely some coming overturning of nations. He took the prophet up to more sublime ground. *The voice said, cry. And he said, what shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: Surely the people is grass. The*

grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever. The frailty of man, and the firmness of God's promises constitute the most striking contrast in the universe. To make us wise, even in relation to our ordinary public duties and trials, God does not, merely or first, point our eyes to the mutations of empire, but to a more imposing, and affecting, and awful spectacle,—to a race, withering like the wilted grass down to the earth; while he calls our attention to his eternal and unchanging *word*, to guide us in our difficulties, to console our wretchedness, and plant in our dying hearts the hopes of immortality!—The act of the divine hand, which has dressed this house in mourning, seems like an act designed to teach us, that nothing but God, should be made our hope, in this crisis of our affairs. Happy for us, if we will think so, and take the *God of Jacob* for our help. We shall best pass the trial,—best stand in the crisis, and best get out of it, when we remember the God of heaven has warned us, and when we turn *first* to Him, in whom alone we can trust securely.

3. The melancholy event before us, seems designed to impress the sentiment of the text, because of its connexion with habits of feeling, which are too common in the nation. It seems to me, that in all our prosperities, we have not been duly grateful. Who of us can pretend, that we have *rendered unto the Lord according to the benefits* we have received? And more especially perhaps, we have been very slow to recognize his hand, in the afflictions we have experienced. While we have blamed *men*, we forgot Him, in whose hand are their hearts. Even

among the most pious in our churches, among those, who have seen and felt the sadness of our reverses; how great has been the unwillingness to feel, that the Lord God was afflicting the nation. Our complaints have been about men; about our rulers. The spirit of an ungenerous rivalry and partizanship has been too common. Its "violence must be greatly mitigated, if not entirely extinguished, or consequences will ensue, which are appalling to be thought of." If something of such a spirit is "necessary, to secure a degree of vigilance sufficient to keep the public functionaries within the bounds of duty and law, at that point its usefulness ends. Beyond that, it becomes destructive of public virtue, the parent of a spirit antagonist to that of liberty, and eventually, its inevitable conqueror." We have historic examples, "where the love of country and of liberty were at one time the dominant passion of the great mass of citizens. And yet, with the continuance of the name and forms of free government, not a vestige of these qualities remaining in the bosom of any of the" people. * * * "It is union that we want; the union of the whole country for the sake of the whole country; for the support, and for handing down to posterity those principles, for which our ancestors so gloriously contended." Our influences have been very greatly devoted to questions of national policy; and righteousness, religion does not condemn a deep interest in public affairs. But when, amid such an interest we forget God, we have greatly erred. The *patriotism* of the people is not to be rebuked;—and they have a right to their own preferences, in respect to measures of govern-

ment, and men to conduct them. The scrutiny, severe scrutiny of public men and public measures, is to be commended in our republic; but there seems to be some reason to fear, that this scrutiny has not always been as *respectful*, as it ought to be. That Christianity, which would teach us not *to speak evil of the ruler of God's people*, to show *respect to magistrates*, is worthy of a deep and very peculiar regard in a land of freedom like this. *We ought to respect office in the person of the officer.* The Savior himself did so. If we cannot respect the *man*, we are bound to respect the *magistrate*. And when the man is only elective, if we deny this respect, we are in danger of bringing the office into contempt, and diminishing the safe-guards, which law and its appointed officers were designed to throw around us. It is not suspicion, but history, that much of this evil has been springing up among us. Office itself, and the law which founded it, have been dishonored, by the erroneous *method*, in which official men have been scrutinized and stigmatized. The scrutiny was right, but the manner was wrong ;—it was peculiarly unwise, in this land. And this evil has arisen very much from overlooking Divine Providence. We have been reluctant to look beyond *man*. We have made our complaints about men; and too little told our sorrows to God. We have been very unwilling, in all our distresses, to own that it *was* God, who had smitten us. Because our evils came through such instrumentalities, we forgot, that the God of heaven wielded them. How many even of Christian men have been so absorbed in the conflicts of our political affairs, that,

in all their fears even, they did not retire for earnest prayer to God!

Perhaps it is one of the weaknesses of human nature, and certainly it is one of the tendencies of human depravity, to be more insensible to divine providences, when human agencies are employed to execute them. We recognize the hand of God in the pestilence, in famine, in the earthquake and hurricane; in all those things, where we see no intervening agency.—We see none here. The disease which has vacated the presidential chair, obeyed no voice but God's. If we have been unwilling to own his hand before, let us own it now. He seems resolved to make us own it. After repeated and continued afflictions, sent in another manner; he has reached forth his own hand to touch us. This is God. He himself is warning us. He seems resolved to let us know it. If we have not deprecated his anger before, let us deprecate it now. Let us realize our prosperities are his gift; and our disappointments and reverses come from his hand. Let us complain with less bitterness about men, and learn to pray with more filial and ready reliance upon God. If it is not so with us, we shall have reason to fear, that he will not avert the evils which are dreaded, and will not preserve our public councils from instability and confusion. If we have good rulers they are God's gift; if we have bad ones, they are God's scourges. And, in few things, are we prone to forget God more unwisely, than in relation to those magistrates, whom we elect from among ourselves. Now, God has made his hand visible. His *own* hand inscribes on the highest seat in our country, *Put not*

your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help: his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth.

However reluctant the people of this nation may have been, amid their afflictions, to see the hand of the Almighty in them, they see it now. Here, they cannot mistake it. And it does seem, as if God were designing to teach them a lesson, which they have been very slow to learn. The lesson is laid down again and again in his word. It is the Lord that setteth up one and putteth down another. The Lord would have a nation know it. When even the sword carves its bloody way to the seat of empire, God calls us to know, it does so at his permission. When treachery or intrigue works its way into power, it is not done without God. When integrity is seated at the helm of rule, it is by the favor of Heaven. All this, his word tells, over and over again. We *need* the repeated lesson. We are prone to forget it. There seems to be some reason to believe, that men are nowhere else, in any important matter, so liable to dishonor God, by disregarding his providences, as in respect to human agencies in government. More readily do they heed providences, in their sickness or health,—in their fields of barrenness or plenty,—on their oceans of shipwreck or success. And in this land, where succession in the head of the nation is not fixed by hereditary descent; where the popular will acts, directly and in sovereignty, upon the government, making and unmaking, at once, the laws and their administrators; there may be, there *seems* to be, a peculiar danger of that impiety, against which the

Bible cautions us. We have nothing in the articles of our political liberty to *force* us upon God. Men are not *born* into office. The people put them there, and can put them out again. Rulers can be changed without the uncertainties and blood of revolution. And when a sober historian will trace the current of sentiment in our country, in respect to public and common recognition of God; he will tell us such a tale of altered sentiments, among our people and among our rulers, as may well make a Christian tremble! The Continental Congress appointed for themselves and recommended to the people repeated days of humiliation and prayer. In a general order to the army, Washington could rebuke profaneness;—in another, drunkenness;—in repeated ones, call on his victorious associates in arms for devout thanksgivings to the God of battles. The old Congress took official measures to have the people supplied with Bibles, by importation from Europe. Such were the men who achieved our liberty and reared the structure of our government! And I am happy to add, that the inaugural address of our late President seemed like bringing us back to the sentiments of the times in which he was cradled;—times, when official men were not ashamed, in their high-places, to honor the Bible and own the rule of its Author. In that address, the departed President said, "I deem the present occasion sufficiently important and solemn to justify me in expressing to my fellow-citizens a profound reverence for the Christian religion; and a thorough conviction, that sound morals, religious liberty, and a just sense of religious responsibility, are essentially connected with all true and lasting happiness. And to that good Be-

ing, who has blest us by the gifts of civil and religious freedom, who watched over and prospered the labors of our fathers, and has hitherto preserved to us institutions far exceeding in excellence those of any other people, let us unite in fervently commending every interest of our beloved country in all future time."

But too commonly the sentiments of our nation, in respect to the government and its success, have been gradually moulded towards an impious atheism! This is fearful history! The Bible rebukes it! And as if to check its dark usurpation, it has pleased the Lord God to show us, that *He has* something to do with our government! Happy for us if we realize it. *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help; whose hope is in the Lord his God.*

The habits of thought and action in our land, the common sentiments of the country, in respect to God's providence over rulers and government, ought to be improved, and turned to a humble recognition of the Lord, by that event, which has laid the head of the nation in the tomb. If impiety will not own God without it, He will compel the acknowledgment by clothing a nation in sackcloth! And if our repeated distresses, which have so much connection with government, if our wars and mobs, and business distresses, and now, our national mourning, do not make us feel that *God* has also, something to do with our government; rely upon it, we may expect another and a heavier stroke! Almighty God is not merely the God of private men. He is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. In our associated capacity, we are bound to recognize Him. He will not allow us to repose our hopes and find them unblast-

ed, on the mere arm of human power. He will punish national sins; and this lesson is read in the departed glory, whose *name* only, hangs over the grave of desolated nations! That lesson of piety, which lies on the face of the text, lies out also on the face of a world's history. Its hints of meaning are found in the ashes of empire;—in crumbled thrones;—along the path of the scourge of war, whitened with the bones of its butchered millions. God will verify his word. The world's history shall stand up, with its thousand startling confirmations; and if we will open our eyes to read them, they will tell us, one after another, *Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, * * * happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help.*

4. The sentiment of the text finds an enforcement from this bereavement, by reason of the peculiar reliances, which the great mass of the people have been reposing on him, whom their suffrages placed at the head of the nation. It is not for us to say they were *mis*-placed. Probably few in the land would be willing to say so, without some qualification, now. But we have nothing to do with that point. It belongs to politics, and not to preaching. It belongs not to religious politics. For our argument, we need nothing more than the fact, that a large portion of the nation, have been relying greatly on the recently established administration, whose head is now no more. Another portion rested *their* hopes, in like manner, in another quarter. The successful majority were elated to still brighter hopes by success.—These expectations of benefit, from the excellence, wisdom and energy of government, are not to be censured. They are right, they

are praiseworthy. They become wrong, only when they are excessive, and when they lead the public mind to a public forgetfulness of God. Good government is to be desired, prized, aimed after. But the desire, the valuation, the aim, are not as they should be, when God is not *more* relied on than government.

Now our idea is, that this event which we deplore, has come in such connection as to call us to feel the force of the text. Glance at the aspect of affairs, as they stood. Things had gone bad among us. No matter, for our argument, whether by misrule, or otherwise. So it was. The nation was excited. The nation rallied. Safely, the nation passed through the unequalled conflicts of mustered opinion. With a submission *worthy of all praise*, the disappointed bowed in silence to the majesty of the popular will. With a moderation *worthy of all praise*, the successful began to use power, not for vengeance, but for the public weal. The nation had reached a resting place. The sea of politics is a sea of storms. It was good to reach a haven. Men breathed easier. The embers of dying hopes began to be lighted up. A conflict had passed, and a majority of the people rested more confident on the rock of our constitution. *Unparalleled* reliances were placed upon the new administration. The farmer, the merchant, the mechanic, even the man of letters and the minister of God, were looking for benefit. At precisely this moment, the arm of the Lord was reached forth! It took THAT MAN, on whom, more than any other, the eyes and hopes of the nation rested! Does not God Almighty mean something by it? True, he has not dashed all a

nation's hopes;—we *expect* a peaceful administration of affairs. But, without crushing us utterly, how *could* the Lord God more plainly and significantly have warned us? This melancholy event seems to preach a *divine* reliance to all the nation: *Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man.* It seems to send this voice down through all ranks of society. The voice reaches every counting-house and shop of industry. It goes out on the fields of labor;—it stretches over plains and mountains;—it takes to the wings of the wind, which bear commerce over the ocean!

Purity and steadiness in human government are matters of vast moment. Civil rule affects, and must ever affect all the interests of society. It bears, on every man's property, every man's labor, liberty, security, and life. And if it stopped there, this pulpit would not have been vocal with such lessons to-day. It does not. Civil rule affects mightily the interests of religion. The salvation of men's souls stands in connection with the peace or war, the virtue or vice, the quiet or disturbances of society, which often spring from civil rule, and spread their influences throughout the world. Regard for government and reliance on it, are religious duties.—But we have some reason to fear, that our reliances have been very excessive. Many among us have been looking for government to make us rich, without labor and persevering industry; to open means of living before us, without our own careful wisdom and prudence and frugality. This reliance has not only been wrong, but extremely perilous. The *true object* of civil government is not, to *endow* us, but

to *secure* us;—not to *gift* us with bounties, but to *guard* us from injuries. And men are engaged in a most perilous experiment, when they would pervert government into a *machinery for donations!* Working on that system, it will be a dangerous instrument. It will inevitably crush labor, dishearten industry, favor corruption and intrigue; and in the end, use the multitude for the benefit of the few. Civil rule is not designed to *enrich* us, but to guard our rights, and foster and protect industry and virtue.—And when we see a great multitude of people, not turning their eyes *first* to the God of heaven, and then to the sober paths of a careful industry;—but, *making haste to be rich*, and resting, (without God, and the hopes of virtue,) all their reliances on the arm of government; we should be recreant to the duties of this pulpit, if we did not ring the words of this text in their ears! We do not decide this point: we do not say that the people of our land generally do so. But we suggest the idea to your consideration, and we affirm, that there is some reason to fear an excessive reliance on men.—If our reliances are duly, and in a wise manner upon God, to give us the benefits intended by civil government; we shall not fail, to aim after men of virtue to rule over us. No true American can ever desire to unite church and state; and a man may be worthy of office, who belongs to no church. But we need men of virtue, of good morals, men of God, to make them our men of trust.—And when we *are* resting on God; we shall not fail to aim after the extension and influences of common intelligence and virtue among the people. There, under God, lies the sheet-anchor of our security!

An intelligent and virtuous people, under our constitution, will have a good government. Nothing can hinder it. But when we behold a common disregard for the extent of profaneness and profligacy among us;—when we see the great mass of the politicians overlooking the very method, in which God grants his most signal national favors, (by making a nation truly virtuous;)—when we behold such eager multitudes, forgetting that a vicious populace is more to be feared, than a vicious government; and relying more on *men to govern*, than on the grace of God to *make men governable;* we find some reasons for fearing, that their human reliances are very excessive, and their religious ones too small.—And the death, which clothes us in mourning, has been sent at just such a period, as if the Lord would warn us, to put *not* our trust in frail man that dieth; and call us to more trust in Him. The illustrious patriot whom we mourn, has gone down to the grave! *In that very day his thoughts perished,* when *unparalleled* reliances were reposing on him! It has shocked the nation's mind! And at such a point,—so soon after the acclamations of millions had followed him to his high seat of honor,—in one short month,—has God called him to the dust;—that we cannot well avoid the conclusion, that God would turn our eyes from the chair of state, to the throne of heaven!—Let us look to God. He only liveth. He only is great. Let us remember the text, and engrave it on our heart, enforced by the memory of the illustrious, but now departed *Harrison.*

And beyond the mere doctrine of the text, may we not justly ask you, to bear a few words of more familiar exhortation.

Many of you have been embarked in conflicts of opinion. You love your country and its constitution. We do not censure it. But may we not ask you to let this sudden bereavement breathe the spirit of kindness over your hearts? Shall it not soften political asperities? Shall it not quell animosity and rancour? Shall it not stop evil surmises and evil speakings? Ye are brethren. The same good land gave you birth, or welcomed your advent from others.—The same constitution gives you freedom. You aim after the same rights and same securities. Ye *are* brethren. Why will ye *not* let this event quell all your animosities, teach you to love as brethren, and diffuse the spirit of forbearance and good will, through hearts solemnized by the pall of death? Ye will. As Americans, as men, ye will. God calls you to do so. Learn to respect one another's opinions and feelings. Learn to forgive one another's errors, and bend the eye of a brotherly indulgence on each other's faults. And let *not* the interests of public affairs, deny your attention and interest in those humbler matters of good neighborhood, and individual virtue, where lie the felicities and securities of social life. Let this sable pall chasten the currents of public opinion; and remind you, that both yourselves and those around you are hasting to the same land of silence!

All of you have often felt proud beatings of heart, while you remembered you were Americans, and turned your eyes toward that temple of freedom, reared on the pillars of your country's constitution. Remember God's own hand planted those pillars; and never would this temple of our freedom have been reared, had not the hands that built it, moved

at the impulses of hearts, which acknowledged the God of heaven! And never shall it crumble down, by any shocks of violence, if those who prize it, shall love one another, and trust in the God of heaven.—Be not idolaters. Try to think soberly. While you prize your country's constitution, *worship* God! He has come near to your government, and the death-toll of a thousand bells has sent the shock of sadness through millions of hearts! God shows you, that after all, government is his. His breath withered its head!—Will you not carefully remember it? When you vote; when you scrutinize legislation; when you judge of public affairs; will you not remember, that, *first* and *supremely*, you are to trust, in the God of heaven;—and if as men, as freemen, you do not please Him, you can have little prospect of sending down unimpaired your cherished institutions to a coming posterity?—The functions of the minister, as we think, do neither call, nor allow him to enter into your conflicts. Religion is his business. And religion, passing over all outward matters, makes human hearts the seat of her empire. This is what we want of you. We want you to recognize God; to be men of God; to trust in God. We want you not to be political idolaters. And, to-day, in the name of the crape that covers you, we ask a place in your hearts, for the influence of religion, to guide, to mould, to purify, all your public action and hopes.

Some of you have hearts very peculiarly sensitive, and which demand of us, not exhortation, but rather consolation in your disappointments and distresses, and at least, a memorial-sketch, of the departed magistrate! Well, we do sympathize with you. We

mourn for your sorrows. And though we said the occasion was too sad for eulogy, we certainly feel no disposition to detract from the fair fame of the illustrious dead! How could we? He loved and served his country. He venerated Christianity. He was mild and merciful as brave. And even religion must respect that tearful sensibility, with which he remembered that gallant band, whose bones now mingle with the dust, on the fields of Tippecanoe.—We will not blame your attachment, or your mourning! But we tell you, your dearest earthly interests, your prosperity and your freedom *cannot* live long and flourish, if, as a people, you are impious towards God. Turn, oh, turn to the God of all goodness to guide you.

But what is the world! How vain and beggarly is all its honor, all its pomp and applause! What extreme short-sightedness characterizes its most prosperous votary, compared with the humblest candidate for immortality!

See here ye worldlings! the pall of death must be lifted, or your eyes will never see *durable riches, even righteousness*,—they are nowhere, but beyond death, in the heaven of that Jesus, who *hath brought life and immortality to light!*—Let this pall rebuke your avarice. An eager spirit of gain, restless and unhappy, has been adding to our country's distresses, and public agitation. Let this solemn event lead you, to look behind the pall of death, and *lay up treasures in heaven!* Your earthly disappointments are of comparatively small moment. If ye are rich only in this world's goods,—truth, with a tongue of dreadfulness, will soon stand over you to exclaim, *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for the mise-*

ries that shall come upon you: your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.

See here, ye hearts ambitious of distinction! Can man be great, since the pall must speak of him? Ask these weeds of mourning how much your coveted distinctions are worth.

Young men, see here! This is the end! You stand now, on the threshold of life, with blood warm and bones full of marrow, and look forth on a life of hope and a world of promise! We call you to look at the *end!* It is a sable gloom, that hangs over the end of all earthly distinctions!

See here, ye men of prayer! Your deep interests in public affairs are not to be censured, if not excessive; but this pall tells you of their vanishing glory! By this memorial I call on you, never to let earthly interests lead you to a forgetfulness of those higher interests, which shall stand forth in all their glory, when the pall of death shall be hung over an extinguished universe!—You live among a nation of immortal souls! Pray, labour for the *souls* of men! If this memorial reminds you of any over-valuing of earthly interests, when amid politics you forgot religion, let this same memorial beseech you never to over-value them again!

See here, ye female auditors, whose happy retirement calls you to none of the turbulence and temptations of public life. Ye are always ready to sympathize in sorrows, to stand round the bed of affliction, and to sanctify with tears of tenderness the drapery of death! To you we assign the office to

pray for the widow and the orphan!—And we ask too, that your pious influences and prayers may be given, for the salvation of the souls of busy *men*,—souls periled, awfully periled,—amid the agitations and business of life!—Ask the good God of grace to save your fathers, brothers, and sons!

See here, ye enquiring sinners! You have begun to seek Christ! He only can lift the pall, and let you look into heaven! Will you not rush to his arms? Surrounded with these weeds of mortality, will you not lift your eyes to *his Father and your Father*, and, with a fixed heart say, once and forever, I give up the world, and my soul takes Christ and immortality!

See here, little children! The sight of these sable cloths will make a lasting impression on your hearts. They tell us, that a distinguished man is dead. But children die too. You will die. Remember, that on this solemn occasion, the minister of God told you, there is another world; and in order to be happy in it, you need Christ to save you;—you need God's forgiveness, through his blood, and hearts renewed by the Holy Ghost. You may die, before you reach manhood. Fear God, my children; trust in Jesus and forsake sin, and then death cannot hurt you.

My dear friends,—we are all mortal. We have few interests here. Let us remember it well. And while we drop the tears of affection over the memory of the President and the patriot, remembering the vanity of all things earthly, let us rise to a dignity worthy of our existence, and through the redemption of Jesus Christ, *seek for honor, and glory, and immortality!* God grant us this. Amen.

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